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Ritual, Knowledge and Liberation in Vedānta¹

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0. Introduction

In Indian tradition “rite” or “ritual,” equivalent to the Sanskrit word *yajña* or *karman*, dates back to the period of the *Veda*, when semi-nomadic Aryan brought their own rituals with them and established their superiority over the indigenous peoples who were not qualified to perform these rituals. Vedic religious texts consist mainly of liturgy. The purpose of this liturgy was “the gratification of the gods in order to obtain from them benefits such as offspring, increase of cattle, a long lifetime, wealth, superiority, success in war.”² In the words of Renou,³ Vedic “liturgy” has “only secondarily” developed into a “speculative system” through the interpretation by the *Brāhmaṇas*. The full understanding of “how a rite originated, why a ritual act is to be performed in a definite way, what is its effect, why a definite utensil should be used, what is the significance and result of definite practices and so on”⁴ and its correct performance, lead to happiness in this world and to heaven after death. *Brāhmaṇas*, which are defined as “explanation of a ritual act and of the formula (*mantra*) belonging to it”⁵ by a later commentator, support the idea that human and divine beings as well as natural powers are related to Vedic ritual. At the same time, those well versed in rituals and entitled to perform them gained power in society. Belief in the efficacy of Vedic rituals was strengthened and the priestly class ranked supreme. Followers of the *Karma-Mīmāṃsā* (ritual-enquiry, also called *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*, hereafter PM)

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² Jan Gonda, *The Ritual Sūtra: A History of Indian Literature*, vol. I, fasc. 2 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), p. 467.

³ “Vedic religion is first and foremost a liturgy, and only secondarily a mythological or speculative system; we must therefore investigate it as a liturgy.” Louis Renou, *Religions of Ancient India* (London, 1953; New Delhi, 1972), p. 29.

⁴ Jan Gonda, *Vedic Literature (Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas): A History of Indian Literature*, vol. I, fasc. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), p. 341.

⁵ Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskara's commentary on *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* I.5.1.

arguing in favor of Vedic ritual tradition in the encounter with other viewpoints such as Buddhism and Jainism, established a speculative system of Vedic ritual.

Mīmāṃsā, which is derived from the verb root “*man*” (to think) by a desiderative (intensive) suffix and thus can mean “desire to think, intense reflection, enquiry,” is considered as one of the six Brāhmaṇical (or orthodox) viewpoints. It is also called *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* (former *Mīmāṃsā*) in contrast to *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā* (latter *Mīmāṃsā*) or *Karma-Mīmāṃsā* (ritual-enquiry) in contrast to *Brahma-Mīmāṃsā* (knowledge-enquiry). The beginnings of PM as a systematic body of knowledge, though *Mīmāṃsā* in a broader sense may be traced to the *Brāhmaṇas*,⁶ is marked by the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* (hereafter MS), where the author Jaimini discusses problems of interpreting Vedic ritual.⁷ The

⁶ See A. Berriedale Keith, *The Karma-Mīmāṃsā* (London, 1921; reprint Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1978), p. 1: “Not rarely in the Brāhmaṇas, especially in later texts like the *Kauṣītaki*, the term *Mīmāṃsā* occurs as the designation of a discussion on some point of ritual practice.” – Louis Renou regards PM as “jurisprudence of ritual acts,” which “only develops the thought of the *Brāhmaṇa*,” *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 43.

⁷ One of the most expressive statements of the idea of PM with regard to the Vedic ritual is found in the following *sūtra* of Jaimini, MS I.2.1.: “*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atadarthānām [...]*” “The purport of the *Veda* is [ritual] activity. And thus whatever does not have this purpose is purposeless [...].” The followers of PM insist that every single word of the *Veda* refers to the ritual activities, since they are the only purport of the *Veda*. This interpretation of PM was absorbed by exponents such as Śabara and Kumārila who strongly opposed Buddhists and Jains, since they challenged the traditional value of the *Veda*. To exclude the ideas of Buddhism and Jainism, which disregard the authority of the *Veda*, was their primary concern and a necessary task in order to defend their orthodox (as they claim themselves to be) position in the Vedic tradition. For them, the superhuman *Veda* is eternal and infallible, and thus the absolute authority that guarantees the correctness of everything described in the *Veda* and the efficacy of ritual activities in rewarding fruits. – According to the earlier followers of PM, certain rituals produce results in this world, and others produce heaven as an ultimate goal, attainable only after death. Śabara, for example, who is the earliest preserved commentator on MS, speaks of heaven in the following manner, *Mīmāṃsāsūtrabhāṣya* of Śabarasvāmin, I-VII, ed. by K.V. Abhyankar, G.A. Jośi et al., Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series (Poona, 1970-76), ad IV.3.15., vol. V, p. 72: “[...] *etat samadhiḡatam ekaṃ phalam iti | idam idānīm sandhiyate – kiṃ yatkiṃcid uta svarga iti [...] | tata ucyaṭe – sa svargaḡ syāt sarvān pratyaviśiṣṭatvāt* (MS IV.3.15) *sarve hi puruṣāḡ svargakāmāḡ | kuta etat | prītir hi svargaḡ | sarvaś ca prītiṃ prārthayate.*” “It is understood [from the examples we have seen with reference to the ritual] that a sole result is brought about by the ritual. Here arises a doubt. Is this sole result heaven, or anything else? [...] Then [the author of the *sūtra*] answers. The sole result would be heaven, as it is equally [desirable] for everyone. Indeed, all men desire heaven. (Objection) But why is it so? (Reply) Because heaven is happiness. And everyone seeks happiness.” – According to Śabara, Vedic rituals are prescribed in order to reach heaven and this is what everyone seeks. People can achieve the highest goal only through performing Vedic rituals. The ultimate purpose is not liberation

interpretative problems which already arose in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas* and which were discussed in an arbitrary and inconsistent way⁸ are investigated in a more systematic manner in MS.

This argumentative reinforcement of ritualism, however, encountered the movement of gnosis-oriented theories within their own tradition. The emphasis on knowledge (*jñāna*) was mainly supported by the *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā* (hereafter UM). Their idea was transformed into supremacy of knowledge over ritual by the famous Śaṅkara. He preferred knowledge described in the *Vedas* as in the Upaniṣadic phrase "*tat tvam asi*," "that you are," to the effects of ritual as in the Vedic phrase "*svargakāmo yajeta*," "one who desires heaven should perform sacrifice."

Bhāskara, who may be assumed to have flourished a few decades later than Śaṅkara,⁹ is well known for his idea that a combination of knowledge and ritual (*jñānakarmasamuccaya*) leads to the highest goal, *i.e.* liberation (*mokṣa*). This idea, which we can appreciate as a revaluation of the *Veda* in its entirety (*karma-* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*), is in complete opposition to Śaṅkara who insists on knowledge alone as the means to liberation.

In this paper I would like to focus on two Vedāntins: Śaṅkara and Bhāskara,¹⁰ who, in explaining UM, maintained opposing views on liberation,

from *saṃsāra* but rebirth in heaven, enjoying immortality (*amṛta*). This consequence is, for example, shown by Vedic statements such as "One who desires heaven should perform the *agnihotra* sacrifice (*agnihotraṃ juhuyāt svargakāmaḥ*)."¹¹ If the first assumption of PM tradition, that the *Veda* is infallible and valid by itself, were accepted, this injunctive statement would guarantee the efficacy of the *Agnihotra* ritual and ensure that the performer reaches heaven. In the course of time, they put much emphasis on the theory of *svataḥprāmāṇya* (self validity of the *Veda*), which ensures its correctness and the authority of the *Veda* and its ritualism.

⁸ See Frits Staal, *Rules without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989). Ibid., *Ritual and Mantras* (Delhi, 1996), p. 117: "Commentaries (= *Brāhmaṇas*, TK) provide rituals with a great variety of interpretations, sometimes inconsistent with each other." "One of the most important of these, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, figures prominently in almost all Western works about Vedic ritual because its translation is widely available and provides such an enormous wealth of interpretations that almost everyone can find something to suit his taste or support her theory."

⁹ See J.A.B. van Buitenen, "The Relative Dates of Śaṅkara and Bhāskara," *Adyar Library Bulletin* 25 (1961), 268-73.

¹⁰ Bhāskara is claimed to have composed commentaries on the *Brahmasūtra*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Chandogya-Upaniṣad*, but only two of them, namely his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* (complete) and his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* (fragment), have survived to the present. In this paper, I would like to discuss Bhāskara's position mainly based on his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*. Since the published edition of BSBh is entirely unreliable, passages quoted from BSBh in this paper are based on my new edition in preparation. See Kato Takahiro, "Brahmasūtrabhāṣya of Bhāskara: An unpublished typescript of J.A.B. van Buitenen and some problems involved" (*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasien* 2008, in press). Page and line numbers refer to the

and to discuss their ideas of ritual and knowledge as a means to liberation.

1. Śaṅkara opposes *karman*

1.1 Historical aspects

The firm belief in the efficacy of rituals was supported, as we have seen, by the interpretation that Vedic scriptures guarantee such an efficacy on the premise that the *Veda* is absolute and infallible. This basic premise common both to PM and UM was shared by the Brāhmaṇical tradition. Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas were supposed to follow the *āśrama* system and were obliged to perform rituals prescribed for a householder (*gṛhastha*).

The Upaniṣadic tendency to raise the value of knowledge above that of Vedic ritual was further promoted by Śaṅkara (700-750 A.D.)¹¹ of Kevala-Advaita-Vedānta, who ascribed an enormous potential to Upaniṣadic knowledge. Knowledge, according to Śaṅkara's notion of *advaita* (one without a second), is the cognitive realization of identity of oneself with the absolute (*brahman*). This is taught by major formulations such as “That (= the absolute) you (= a self) are.”

viruddhatvād ataḥ śakyam karma kartum na vidyayā |
*sahaivam viduṣā tasmāt karma heyam mumukṣunā ||*¹²

Because of the incompatibility [of knowledge with action (= ritual)], a man who knows thus cannot combine action (= ritual) with knowledge. For this reason, action (= ritual) should be renounced by a seeker after liberation.¹³

*tasmāt tyājyam karma mumukṣubhiḥ |*¹⁴

Therefore action (= ritual, TK) should be abandoned by seekers after final release.¹⁵

1915 edition. Materials for Śaṅkara dealt with in this study seem very limited compared with the enormous amount of his works, but it is sufficient, I believe, to contrast the difference of their views and positions.

¹¹ See Nakamura Hajime, *Shoki no Vedānta Tetsugaku* 初期のヴェーダーンタ哲學, partly translated into English in *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Iwanami 岩波書店, 1950), p. 119.

¹² Upad I.1.15.

¹³ Mayeda Sengaku, *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṅkara* (Tōkyō: University of Tōkyō Press, 1979; reprint Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 104, with a slight modification by this author.

¹⁴ Upad I.1.21ab.

¹⁵ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 105.

tyajet tasmāt kriyāḥ sarvāḥ sādhanaiḥ saha mokṣavit ||¹⁶

Therefore the knower of final release should abandon all actions (= rituals, TK) together with their accessories.¹⁷

tasmāt sasādhanaṃ karma parityaktavyaṃ mumukṣuṇā
paramātmābhedaśanavirodhāt |¹⁸

Therefore, the seeker after final release should abandon the ritual together with its requisites since [they] are contradictory to the view of the identity [of *Ātman*] with the highest *Ātman*.¹⁹

It should be noted that Śaṅkara, judging by his statements, claims that ritual, or activity in a broader sense of the term *karman*, should be renounced by a seeker of liberation. Although within the Brāhmanical tradition, he does not recognize the merit of ritual. Radhakrishnan sees Śaṅkara's idea as challenging the tradition or an ideology prevailing at his time:

He [Śaṅkara] felt that the Mīmāṃsakas (PM, TK) had bent the bow too much on the side of works by declaring that mere ritualistic formalism was adequate for gaining us freedom of spirit. His denial of the adequacy of works to salvation is a reaction against the exaggerated emphasis which the Mīmāṃsakas place on Vedic ritualism.²⁰

This remark of Radhakrishnan on Śaṅkara's rejection of Vedic ritualism is quite reasonable if we take into account the historical fact that the period in which Śaṅkara lived was “the Golden Age of the [Karma-, TK] Mīmāṃsā.”²¹ Śaṅkara attacked the great thinkers of PM.

yat tu kaiścij jalpyate --- nityāni naimittikāni karmāṇy anuṣṭhīyante
pratyavāyānutpattaye |
kāmyāni pratiṣiddhāni ca parihriyante svarganarakānavāptaye | [...] varta-
mānadehapātād ūrdhvaṃ dehāntarapratibandhānakāraṇābhāvāt [...] kaivalyaṃ
vināpi brahmātmatayaivaṃvṛttasya setsyatīti |
tad asat | pramāṇābhāvāt | na hy etac chāstreṇa kenacit pratipāditam ---
mokṣārthātthaṃ samācared iti |²²

Some [traditional ritualists] state as follows: In order to avoid causing sins, obligatory rituals (*nityakarman*) and occasional rituals (*naimittikakarman*)

¹⁶ Upad I.16.43cd.

¹⁷ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁸ Upad II.1.32.

¹⁹ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 221.

²⁰ S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. I-II (London: Oxford University Press, 1923; Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 1999), pp. 627.

²¹ Jean-Marie Verpoorten, *Mīmāṃsā Literature: A History of Indian Literature*, vol. VI, fasc. 5 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), pp. 22 ff.

²² BSSbh ad IV.3.14., p. 499, ll. 21-7.

are performed. In order to avoid reaching heaven and hells optional rituals (*kāmyakarma*) and prohibited rituals (*pratiṣiddhakarma*) are abandoned. [...] Since there is no cause for uniting again with another body after the decay of the present body (= after one's death), it is possible for a man acting in such a manner (= performing appropriate rituals) to attain the absolute unity (= liberation) even without the identification of oneself with the absolute (= knowledge).

[Śāṅkara answers.] This is not correct. Because there is no authority to support this idea. In fact, no [Vedic] instruction teaches that one who seeks for liberation should perform the rituals as such.

A ritualist, identified as Kumārila by Mesquita,²³ defends the idea that people can attain liberation when they continue to perform the appropriate rituals, in which case knowledge becomes practically useless. Presuming that such an intention of PM prevailed at the time of Śāṅkara, his overemphasis on knowledge in line with UM could be seen in contrast to this.

1.2 Social aspects

Śāṅkara's anti-ritualistic position has been explained from the point of view of UM's reaction to PM. This argument is based on the widely accepted view that "the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā is so called because it is earlier (*pūrva*) than the Uttara Mīmāṃsā, not so much in the chronological as in the logical sense."²⁴ But recent studies show that this point does not suffice to fully explain the matter, which is not that simple.

Slaje, starting from Mesquita's investigation according to which Kumārila and his predecessors such as Jaimini and Śābara were, contrary to the general assumption, in favor of a theory of liberation from transmigration in line with UM,²⁵ reconsiders liberation theories of two Mīmāṃsakas, *i.e.* followers of

²³ Kumārila (650-700 A.D.) is one of the outstanding exponents of PM; see Nakamura Hajime, *Shoki no Vedānta Tetsugaku*, p. 120. He is a generation older than Śāṅkara, and his *Ślokavārttika*, according to some scholars, is referred to by Śāṅkara; see K.B. Pathak, "Dharmakīrti and Śaṅkarācārya," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18 (1894), p. 89; see also S.K. Belvalkar, *Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, Shree Gopal Basu Marik lectures on Vedānta Philosophy, Part 1 (Poona, 1929), p. 209. To take an example pointed out by Mesquita: *mokṣārthī na pravarteta tatra kāmyaniṣiddhayaḥ | nityanaimittike kuryāt pratyavāyajihāsaya || Sambandhākṣepa-parihāra* of ŚV 110. "One who seeks for liberation should not engage in optional and prohibited rituals. | Instead, in the desire of avoiding sins, he should perform obligatory and occasional rituals." Mesquita identifies this passage of ŚV as referred to and criticized by Śāṅkara in this quoted passage; Roque Mesquita, "Die Idee der Erlösung bei Kumārila-bhaṭṭa", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 38 (1994), pp. 451-484, see p. 458, fn. 33.

²⁴ S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, p. 374.

²⁵ Roque Mesquita, "Die Idee der Erlösung bei Kumārila-bhaṭṭa", p. 479: „Im Widerspruch zu bisherigen anderslautenden Meinungen hat die frühe Mīmāṃsā den

PM and UM, in relation to two modes of *āśrama* in the early Vedic period.

For one thing, there is indeed good reason to assign the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsakas to the householder's order (*grhastha-āśrama*), since as followers of the Karmakāṇḍa they were sacrificing (*karmins*). The Uttara-Mīmāṃsakas in contrast belonged to the order of renouncers (*saṃnyāsa-āśrama*). As followers of the Jñānakāṇḍa their emphasis was on gnosis alone (*jñānins*), and they rejected performing sacrifices.²⁶

A decisive difference between Śaṅkara and Kumārila consists not so much in their difference as Pūrvamīmāṃsaka or Uttaramīmāṃsaka, but rather in their choice of modes of life as householders or ascetics. Thus the argument of Śaṅkara against Kumārila can be seen as a counter-action of ascetics versus householders. The examples given by Slaje help to understand this perspective more clearly. Bhartṛprapañca and Maṇḍana, authors of UM treatises and accordingly known as Uttaramīmāṃsakas, while emphasizing the importance of knowledge found a certain value in performing rituals. In this sense, these two Uttaramīmāṃsakas share a similar idea with the Pūrvamīmāṃsaka Kumārila. But this should not come as a surprise, since it is very natural, according to this new perspective, that the householders Bhartṛprapañca and Maṇḍana should have more in common with a householder such as Kumārila than with an ascetic such as Śaṅkara.²⁷ What they have in common in the present context, as Slaje points out,²⁸ is the theory that the combination of knowledge and ritual (*jñānakarmasamuccaya* or *karmajñānasamuccaya*) would lead to liberation, which we will discuss in detail in the following section.

1.3 Theoretical aspects

Another aspect that we would like to discuss here is Śaṅkara's theoretical divergence from ritualism. Let us first of all review Śaṅkara's idea of liberation.

anyadr̥ṣṭis tv avidyā syāt tannāśa mokṣa ucyate |²⁹

Seeing difference is nescience. Its cessation is called final release.³⁰

Begriff der Erlösung als Befreiung vom *saṃsāra* sehr wohl gekannt. Diese Tradition setzt sich bei Kumārila fort."

²⁶ Walter Slaje, "Yājñavalkya-brāhmaṇa and the Early Mīmāṃsā," *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), pp. 115-158, see p. 119.

²⁷ See Slaje, *ibid.*, pp. 126 f.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-127.

²⁹ Upad I.17.7ab.

³⁰ Mayeda Sengaku, *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 160.

ātmapratyāyikā hy eṣā sarvavedāntagocarā |
jñātvaitāṃ hi vimucyante sarvasaṃsārabandhanaiḥ ||³¹

This true thought leads [people] to understand *Ātman*, for which all Upaniṣadic sentences are aiming. Having come to know this, they are released from all the bonds of transmigratory existence.³²

avidyāmātra evātaḥ saṃsāro 'stv avivekataḥ |³³

Therefore let transmigratory existence be nothing but nescience due to the absence of discriminating knowledge.³⁴

To outline Śaṅkara's idea briefly, liberation is freedom from transmigration (*saṃsāra*). Transmigration is nothing but nescience that he defines as “seeing [the] difference” between the absolute and oneself. As he repeats, the only means to destroy nescience is knowledge (*jñāna* or *vidyā*).

vidyāvājñānahānāya na karmāpratikūlataḥ |³⁵

Only knowledge [of *Brahman*] can destroy ignorance; action (= ritual) cannot [destroy it] since [action (= ritual)] is not incompatible [with ignorance].³⁶

jñānenaiva tu so 'pi syād virodhitvān na karmaṇā ||³⁷

And this cessation can arise not through action (= ritual) but through knowledge alone, since [that] is incompatible [with nescience].³⁸

He emphasizes that knowledge (*jñāna*) alone, the opposite notion of *ajñāna*, can neutralize nescience. More precisely, taking into consideration his argument brought forward elsewhere that the triplet of nescience (*avidyā*), passion (*kāma*) and ritual (*karman*) causes *saṃsāra*,³⁹ knowledge can destroy nescience and, accordingly, *saṃsāra*, which is caused by nescience. Ritual, on the other hand, belongs to the same sphere of *saṃsāra* and, as it does not counteract nescience, it could never destroy nescience.

na tato 'mṛtatāśāsti karmaṇo 'jñānahetutaḥ |
mokṣasya jñānahetutvān na tadanyad apekṣate ||⁴⁰

³¹ Upad I.17.83.

³² Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 168, with a slight modification by this author.

³³ Upad I.18.45ab.

³⁴ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁵ Upad I.1.6ab.

³⁶ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁷ Upad I.17.7cd.

³⁸ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁹ *Chāndogyaopaniṣadbhāṣya* ad VI.8.1: “*avidyākāmakarmabhiḥ saṃsārahetubhiḥ* [...]” “[...] by nescience, passion and activity (= ritual) which cause *saṃsāra* [...]”

⁴⁰ Upad I.11.15.

Therefore there is no hope of immortality from action (= ritual) which has ignorance as its cause. Since the cause of final release is knowledge, it does not depend upon anything else but knowledge.⁴¹

*nājñānasyāprahāṇe hi rāga dveṣaḥ śayo bhavet ||*⁴²
rāga dveṣaḥ śayābhāve karma doṣodbhavaṃ dhruvam |
*tasmān niḥśreyasārthāya vidyāivātra vidhīyate ||*⁴³

Unless ignorance is destroyed, passion and aversion will not be destroyed. Unless passion and aversion are destroyed, action (= ritual) arises inevitably from [those] faults. Therefore, for the sake of final beatitude, only knowledge [of *Brahman*] is set forth here [in the Vedānta].⁴⁴

The destruction of nescience would cause the cessation of passion. Once passion has ceased, there is no need for activities which include rituals. Śaṅkara insists that this is how we realize liberation.

It is a matter of argument whether Śaṅkara developed his idea of Gnostic enlightenment in such ways that it would counteract the ritualism of his predecessor, or whether he came to attack it in consequence of his belief that knowledge itself is liberation. In any case, his argument against ritualism was radical in the Brāhmaṇical tradition of those days and had a great impact on the later phase of Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism.

2. Ritual and Knowledge for Liberation

2.1 Bhāskara's idea of ritual

Bhāskara, perhaps a generation younger than Śaṅkara, strongly criticized him for deviating from tradition (*sampradāya*). For example, he criticizes the way Śaṅkara comments on the *Brahmasūtra* (hereafter BS) as being intentional:

sūtrābhiprāyaśaṃvṛtyā svābhiprāyaparakāśanāt |
*vyākhyātāṃ yair idaṃ śāstraṃ vyākhyeyaṃ tannivṛttaye ||*⁴⁵

This knowledge system [of *Brahmasūtra*] needs to be explained in order to reject the [views of the] distinguished commentator, who commented upon this *sūtra* by displaying his own intentions through concealing the true intention of the *sūtra*.”

If we take the plural “*yair*” as an honorific form, it becomes clear that he

⁴¹ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴² Upad I.1.6cd.

⁴³ Upad I.1.7.

⁴⁴ Mayeda, *ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴⁵ BSBh, *Upodghāta*.

criticizes Śaṅkara. Bhāskara insists that Śaṅkara was not very true to tradition, which Bhāskara never embraces. The intention of the author of BS alone is relevant for Bhāskara. What is this intention which he considers traditional?

atra hi jñānakarmasamuccayān mokṣaprāptiḥ sūtrakāśyābhipretā |⁴⁶

For, here, the intention of the author of the *sūtra* is that liberation is attained through the combination of knowledge and ritual.

The author of the *sūtra* says that liberation is attained by means of *jñāna-karmasamuccaya* (the combination of knowledge and ritual, hereafter JKS). This idea of JKS, which Bhāskara claims to be traditional,⁴⁷ must have prevailed in the later phase of Brāhmaṇical tradition, when we consider the above-mentioned fact that followers of PM also shared this idea.⁴⁸ In this context Bhāskara did not doubt the significance of Vedic ritual, which would characterize him as a ritual-orientated Uttaramīmāṃsaka. More important to him was a complete knowledge of rituals in order to combine them correctly with Upaniṣadic knowledge.

karmaṇi cāparijñāte vidyāyāḥ kena samuccayaḥ kena neti vibhāgo na śakyate vaditum heyopādeyapratipattyabhāvāt | pūrvavṛtte tu karmajñāne kāmyaṃ pratiśiddhaṃ ca heyam nityena karmaṇā samuccaya itī pratipādayitum śakyate |⁴⁹

As long as ritual is not entirely understood, it is not possible to tell which [ritual] should be combined with Upaniṣadic knowledge (*vidyā*) and which should not, since one could not know which ritual should be abandoned and which should be carried out. On the other hand if knowledge about rituals has arisen beforehand, it is possible to tell that optional and prohibited rituals should be abandoned and that obligatory ritual should be combined with Upaniṣadic knowledge.

This statement is made in reply to an opponent who insists that one can attain the highest goal without performing or even knowing rituals. This objection,

⁴⁶ BSBh ad I.1.1. (p. 2, ll. 18-19).

⁴⁷ Nakamura, in his study of the *Brahmasūtra* which compares three commentaries by Śaṅkara, Bhāskara and Rāmānuja, concludes that “Bhāskara's commentary is closest to the intent of BS and his interpretation of the words of BS is very reliable,” and on the other hand, “In the case of Śaṅkara, though his interpretation of the words of BS is fairly reliable, his thought prevailing throughout the entire BS is far different from that of the author of BS.” Nakamura Hajime, *Brahmasūtra no Tetsugaku* ブラフマストラの哲學, partly translated into English in *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Iwanami 岩波書店, 1951), pp. 393 f., translated into English here by the present author. If we take Nakamura's conclusion into account, Bhāskara's claim should not be regarded as a self-righteous insistence but as an honest appeal resulting from his opinion.

⁴⁸ See Section 2.1.

⁴⁹ BSBh ad I.1.1. (p. 2, ll. 20-23).

presumably that of Śaṅkara, was unacceptable to Bhāskara, since he held the view that UM is a continuation of PM, that is, the enquiry into Upaniṣadic knowledge remains incomplete without the enquiry into rituals. This is a common view among those who advocate JKS and can probably be traced back to one of the oldest commentators, Upavarṣa, whose commentaries on both MS and BS are lost and are known only from his name which is mentioned in MSSbh, BSbh and BSBh.⁵⁰

Bhāskara's point that optional rituals caused by desires such as "One who desires heaven should sacrifice (*svargakāmo yajeta*)"⁵¹ or "One who desires a son should sacrifice (*putrakāmo yajeta*)"⁵² should be abandoned and obligatory rituals lacking desires such as "One should perform obligatory rituals as long as one lives"⁵³ should be performed, reminds us of PM's view on ritual where it is said, "One should not engage in optional and prohibited rituals. Instead, one should perform obligatory and occasional rituals."⁵⁴ Bhāskara's definition and assessments of rituals equal PM's. However there is one difference: Bhāskara combines some rituals with knowledge for the purpose of liberation. Here, he quotes and refutes an opponent's view that only knowledge regardless of any ritual activities can lead to liberation.

*atrāha --- atsu tarhi kevalād eva jñānān muktiḥ karmanirapekṣāt |
caturvidhaṃ hi karmakāryam⁵⁵ | utpādyam āpyaṃ vikāryaṃ saṃskāryaṃ ceti |
na tāvan mokṣākhyam brahmasvarūpam utpādyam anityatvaprasaṅgāt | ato
notpattiyartham agnihotrādikarma | nāpi karmaṇā brahmāptiḥ⁵⁶ sarvagatat-
vena nityāptasvarūpāt | na ca kriyayā vikriyate carmavad anityatvapra-
saṅgāt | nāpi saṃskriyate nityasyātiśayāsambhavāt | ataḥ kāryānupraveśo na
śakyate kalpayitum⁵⁷ iti |⁵⁸*

With reference to this, an opponent says, "there must be liberation only through knowledge regardless of ritual. There are indeed four kinds of effects caused by [ritual] actions. These [four effects] are what is produced, what is attained, what is modified and what is purified. And first of all, the true nature of the absolute which is called [the state of] liberation cannot be produced. Because [if we consider it as something produced,] it

⁵⁰ MSSbh ad I.1.5; see Jean-Marie Verpoorten, *Mīmāṃsā Literature*, p. 7; BSbh (p. 125, l. 10; p. 424, l. 2), BSBh (p. 6, ll. 19-20; p. 62, ll. 16-7; p. 63, ll. 2-3; p. 124, l. 28).

⁵¹ *Āpastambha-Śrautasūtra* X.2.1, cf. BSBh, p. 5, l. 14.

⁵² *Ṛgveda* X.183, cf. BSBh, p. 5, l. 14.

⁵³ See BSBh, p. 5, l. 17.

⁵⁴ See Section 1.1.

⁵⁵ Emended as *karmakāryam* for *karmakārakam* on the basis of the reading of BSBh (VB).

⁵⁶ Emended as *brahmāptiḥ* for *brahmāpyate* on the basis of the reading of BSBh (VB).

⁵⁷ Emended as *kalpayitum* for *vyutpādayitum* on the basis of the reading of BSBh (VB).

⁵⁸ BSBh ad I.1.4. (p. 20, ll. 3-9.)

would follow that the absolute is not eternal. Therefore, rituals such as the *Agnihotra* is producing something do not [serve to liberation]. Second, the absolute (= the state of liberation) cannot be attained by means of rituals. Because it exists in the form of being eternally attained, for it is omnipresent. [In the third place,] it cannot be modified by [any] ritual unlike [in the case with tanning] leather. Because, [if we consider it as something modified,] it would [again] follow that it is not eternal. Lastly, it is not regarded as something purified. Because, being eternal, it cannot have a surplus [of purification]. Therefore, there is no place for assuming rituals to be introduced [for the purpose of liberation].⁵⁹

The opponent analyzes four varieties of effects, to what extent actions are their causes including, of course, ritual activities. His argument is that liberation, which is to be regarded as being identical with the absolute (*advaita*), does not fall into any of these categories. This means that liberation is something different from what is caused by actions (= rituals). Therefore, he concludes that ritual never serves the purpose of liberation.

Bhāskara argues against this opinion:

*atrocyate --- satyaṃ trividhaṃ karma na sambhavadīti | āpyaṃ tu na śakyate nirasitum | yathaiva jñānenāvidyānivṛttidvāreṇa brahmasvarūpam avāpyata ity abhyupagamyate tathā karmasahitenety abhyupagantavyam --- "yajñena dānena"*⁶⁰

*iti viniyogāt | yadi ca nityaprāpto mokṣaḥ syād ayatnena siddhatvāt sarvo lokomucyeta*⁶¹

[Bhāskara] answers to this point. True, it is not possible to suppose [that liberation falls into any of] three effects [namely, what is produced, what is modified and what is purified]. But we cannot exclude the possibility of assuming liberation as something attained. As you accept that the true nature of the absolute is attained through knowledge which dissolves neuroscience, so you should agree that [it is attained] through [knowledge] combined with rituals, since there is an instruction [of the *Veda*] "by means of sacrifice and offering." Further, if liberation is attained eternally, being attained without any effort, everyone would be liberated because [liberation] would manifest itself effortlessly."

Since the absolute (= *brahman*) is, according to the opponent, already and

⁵⁹ It is more than probable that this opponent is Śaṅkara who states in his Upad as follows, Upad I.17.49: "utpādyāpyavikāryāṇi saṃskāryaṃ ca kriyāphalam | - nāto 'nyat karmaṇaḥ kāryaṃ tyajet tasmāt sasādhanaṃ ||" "Actions (= rituals) result in things being produced, obtained, changed or purified. There are no results of action (= ritual) other than these. Therefore one should abandon [actions (= rituals)] together with [their] requisites." Tr. by Mayeda Sengaku, *A Thousand Teachings*, p. 165.

⁶⁰ BĀU IV.4.22; VI.2.16.

⁶¹ BSBh ad I.1.4. (p. 20, ll. 9-14).

always there, because it is eternal and all-pervading, it requires only knowledge “*tat tvam asi*” to be realized “without any effort.” Śaṅkara's concept, in which a somewhat accidental mode of liberation is inherent and which would accordingly devalue human effort, was unacceptable for Bhāskara, who emphasizes the activity, in other words, efforts, for the purpose of liberation. Judging from the above discussion, it is reasonable to consider Bhāskara's emphasis on ritual as a return to tradition which valued “effort” spent on rituals more highly, though of course in the form of a reaction to Śaṅkara's unreasonable overestimation of Gnosticism.

2.2 Bhāskara's idea of knowledge

Let us quote here again Bhāskara's basic concept of JKS:

karmanā samuccitaṃ jñānaṃ kṣemaṃrāptinimitam iti |⁶²

Knowledge combined with ritual causes the attainment of liberation.

The “ritual” intended here by Bhāskara is, as we have seen in the previous section, obligatory ritual (*nityakarma*) that is to be performed regularly. In what way does he understand the term “knowledge (*jñāna*)”?

prathamam tāvad vākyād brahmasvarūpaviśayaṃ jñānam utpadyate | tac ca prameyarūpāvacchedakaṃ ghaṭādiviśayaṃpratyakṣādijñānavat | idaṃ tūpāsanaṃ nirṇīte vastutattve paścāt kriyate yathā gurum upāste rājānam upāsta iti | jñānasvarūpasya gurvāder upāsanaṃ bhavati | tac ca vidhigamyam |⁶³

In the first stage, knowledge of the true nature of the absolute arises from an [Upaniṣadic] statement. And this [knowledge] determines the form of the object of cognition like knowledge of a pot etc. through [the means of valid cognition] such as perception. And in the second stage, once the real has been adequately ascertained, [it is] made [the object of] dedication (*upāsana*) just as “he is dedicated to his teacher” and “he is dedicate to the king.” There is a dedication to the teacher etc. who is knowledge as such. And this [dedication] is known from [Vedic] injunction.

Bhāskara sets up two kinds of knowledge and takes a gradual approach to *jñāna*. In contrast to Śaṅkara who insists that knowledge of the absolute is nothing but liberation, Bhāskara adds a few more, but very important steps to liberation. Even if we know the true nature of the absolute, it is not our highest goal. We need to be dedicated to knowledge (*upāsana*) and combine this with obligatory ritual. Bhāskara's usage of “knowledge” in the context of JKS is connected by “dedication to” the absolute, which is knowledge and identified as such. The fact that he sometimes uses the compound “combination of

⁶² BSBh ad I.1.1. (p. 4, l. 18).

⁶³ BSBh ad III.3.1. (p. 174, ll. 10-14).

ritual and *upāsana*” instead of JKS⁶⁴ also shows that to him *jñāna* and *upāsana* were interchangeable terms.

Another significant point in his understanding of Upaniṣadic knowledge derives from relating *upāsana* to injunction (*vidhi*). This idea can be seen from his frequent references to the Upaniṣadic sentences, which contain injunctions such as “One should be dedicated to (*upāsīta*),”⁶⁵ “One should hear (*śrotavya*),”⁶⁶ and so on. His uniqueness stands out when we refer again to Śaṅkara who is comfortable with the denotative knowledge, “That you are (*tat tvam asi*).” This formulation of knowledge is clearly illustrated in association with two kinds of Upaniṣadic sources, that is, denotative and injunctive.

*ko 'sav ātmety apekṣāyām svarūpābodbhāparāṇi*⁶⁷ --- *idaṃ sarvaṃ yad ayam ātmā*⁶⁸ *sa ya eṣo 'ṇimaitadātmīyam*⁶⁹ *idaṃ sarvaṃ*⁷⁰ *ityādīni prativēdāntaṃ pravartante | vidite cātmataṭṭve pratyayāvṛttilakṣaṇaṃ tadupāsanaṃ upadiśyate* --- *nididhyāsitavyo*⁷¹ *vijñāya prajñāṃ kurvīta*⁷² *iti* |⁷³

With regard to the enquiry “What is the Self (*ātman*)?” there are statements in every Upaniṣad such as “Whatever is here, it is *ātman*,” “*ātman* is the subtle, the nature of which this whole world shares,” and so on, that serve to teach the true nature [of *ātman*]. When the nature of *ātman* is known, then the dedication to it, which is characterised by the repetition of knowledge, is taught as follows: “One should concentrate on it,” “After knowing [the true nature of *ātman*], one should confirm it,” and so on.

Upaniṣadic statements on knowledge are divided into two categories; firstly the identification of oneself with the absolute, and secondly, the dedication to the first one. Bhāskara's interpretation of the second one (*upāsana*) as prescribed in the form of injunctions (= *vidhi*) shows that he considered *upāsana* as activity, which should be maintained by human effort. And this dedication to knowledge, combined with obligatory rituals also prescribed by injunctions, would lead to liberation. In this view, Bhāskara puts much stress on imperative aspects of the *Veda* rather than on the instructive aspects of it. This increases the authority of the *Veda* and accordingly strengthens the belief in its efficacy, which is part of Bhāskara's mission as a traditionalist especially against those who stand outside the Brāhmaṇical tradition.

⁶⁴ E.g., “*karmopasanayoś ca samuccayo*” (BSBh: p. 3, ll. 21–2), “*samuccityopāsanaṃ*” (BSBh: p. 198, l. 17).

⁶⁵ E.g., BSBh, p. 99, l. 22. (ChU I.4.1).

⁶⁶ E.g., BSBh: p. 3, l. 10. (BĀU II.4.5; IV.5.6).

⁶⁷ Emended as *parāṇi* for *parāṇām* on the basis of the reading of BSBh(VB).

⁶⁸ BĀU II.4.6; IV.5.7.

⁶⁹ Emended as *ṇimaitad*^a for *yad aṇimaitad*^a on the basis of the reading of BSBh(VB).

⁷⁰ E.g., ChU VI.8.7; 9.4; 10.3.

⁷¹ BĀU II.4.5; IV.5.6.

⁷² BĀU IV.4.21.

⁷³ BSBh ad I.1.1. (p. 3, ll. 18–21).

Another part of his mission would be the revaluation of the mode of living as a householder against being ascetics. Contrary to the idea of retreating to the forest and withdrawing from social activity, his emphasis in this context was on human effort (= action), which, as guaranteed by the *Veda*, infallibly leads to liberation.

3. Concluding Remark

We have examined concepts of ritual and knowledge as a means to liberation in the Brāhmaṇical tradition, by mainly comparing the ideas of two Vedāntins, Śaṅkara and Bhāskara. Both are known as Uttaramīmāṃsakas in the Brāhmaṇical tradition, but their attitudes on Vedic ritual and Upaniṣadic knowledge differ substantially. Here, I would like to sum up their points of agreement and disagreement in the light of ritual, knowledge and liberation.

To begin with their views on the *Veda*, they share the common conviction that the *Veda* is absolute and infallible. It is the only source of knowledge and also the authority on the correctness of knowledge. This they have in common with other followers of PM.

The crucial difference between them is that Bhāskara assigns a high value on performing Vedic rituals while Śaṅkara does not. This difference, although it is a matter for argument whether it is based on the difference in their life modes or in their doctrinal affiliation, caused a theoretical divergence on the means of liberation.

Śaṅkara's negative attitude towards ritualism was a challenge to the traditional value, which had been upheld from the period of the *Brāhmaṇas* down to the age of PM, and was defied by the traditionalist Bhāskara. Followers of PM and Bhāskara, whom we may call traditionalists or ritualists in this context, defended Vedic ritualism which was attacked by followers of non-Brāhmaṇical traditions and by others who held different views on their own traditions. From a broader point of view, what they tried to safeguard was not only Vedic ritual itself, but also its authority.

Ritual-oriented exponents such as Bhāskara emphasized the injunctive aspect of Vedic statements. Their interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* is meant to make it clear that the intention of the *Veda* is to impel us into ritual activities, intellectual activities or both. This was the way in which the traditionalists connected Vedic ritualism with the concept of liberation.

Texts and Abbreviations

BĀU	Brhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad, <i>Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads</i> , vol. I, ed. by V.P. Limaye and R.D. Vadekar (Poona, 1958).
BSBh	<i>Brahmasūtra</i> with a commentary by Bhāskarāchārya, ed. by V.P. Dvivedin, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series 20 (Varanasi, 1991; reprinted and published from the earlier edition in 1915).
BSBh(VB)	<i>Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya</i> , ed. by J.A.B. van Buitenen, ms. date unknown.
BSŚbh	<i>Brahmasūtrabhāṣya</i> of Śaṅkara, Text with <i>Tippaṇis</i> , revised by Wāsudeo Laxmaṇ Shāstrī Paṇṣikar (Bombay: Nirṇayasāgar Press, 1915).
ChU	Chāndogya-Upaniṣad, <i>Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads</i> , vol. I, ed. by V.P. Limaye and R.D. Vadekar (Poona, 1958).
ŚV	<i>Ślokavārttika</i> , with the commentary <i>Nyāyaratnākara</i> of Śrī Pārthasārathi Miśra, ed. and rev. by G.S. Rai (Varanasi, 1993).
Upad	Śaṅkara's <i>Upadeśasāhasrī</i> , critically ed. with Introduction and Indices, by Sengaku Mayeda (Tōkyō: The Hokuseido Press, 1973).